

DOING GOOD

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“EVANGELISM BEGINS AT HOME.” That will be the topic, and I hope and pray that what I say will not only be a challenge, but it will be from the Word of God. That is my plan, my hope, and my prayer. My hope and prayer also is that what I say on this subject will instill in us a desire to be more conscious of the job and responsibility we have as God’s people.

In Acts 1, verse 8 beginning, we have there God’s plan, God’s arrangement and HIS schedule, as it were, about Evangelism. I want to refer to the book of Haggai, in the Old Testament, just for a basic simple introduction.

Haggai has two chapters and thirty eight verses. As you remember, the Jewish people were allowed to return from Babylon back to Jerusalem and of this group of some 50,000 people their job was to rebuild the Temple . . . Rebuild God’s House. The Bible tells us that Babylon failed. Historical and Archaeological accounts tells us Babylon failed on October 10, 539 B.C. You say, big deal! Well the reason I’m saying that is because it took them four months to go from Babylon back to Jerusalem, and those 50,000 people had but one job and that was to requild the House of God, to rebuild the Temple.

The Bible says that Haggai was chosen by our Heavenly Father to go and speak to the Jewish people. Haggai did so, and the year was 520 B.C. So you can see the picture before us. They had been back from Babylon, back from Jerusalem 19 years and they had not done their job. As a matter of fact, in the first six verses, the Bible said Haggai gave a scavenging rebuke. He said you earn money but it’s like putting money in a bag of holes. You don’t ever get enough. He said, you have drink but you are never satisfied. You have enough food but you’re not filled. You have clothes but you are not warm. Twice in that chapter he says that God’s house is laying in waste. As a matter of fact, Haggai asked, “Is it right for you to dwell in your ceiled house while this house of God is waste, in ruins?” Haggai said, “You better get busy!” Then he told them, from God, “the reason God has not blessed you and been with you is because you haven’t done what HE told you to do. Get busy and do HIS work!”

I believe that the book of Haggai serves as a basis, and the book of Acts will prove what I want to say. And that is, these people had a mission and they failed that simple mission, for nineteen years. Oh they had their jobs and time, but they had no time for God.

I’m told the latest stats, as of 2001, that there are 13,097 congregations of the Church of Christ in the United States. There are some one and a quarter million members of the Church of Christ in the United States. We have 982 missionaries. You say, “Well, we’re doing a great job. But Southern Baptist has nearly 4,000. That’s four times as many as the Church of Christ.

When you break down the membership, by congregations, there’s nearly 6,000 congregations, or 46% of all Churches of Christ in the United States, that have an

attendance of 1 to 49. Some 3600 congregations have 50 to 99 in attendance. Some 2,000 congregations have 100 to 199 in attendance, and that leaves 1,370 that have an attendance of 200 or more. In other words, 90% of all Churches of Christ have between 1 and 199 on their score board every Sunday in attendance.

In the state of Texas, there's 2,193 congregations. In Tennessee, there's 1,467 congregations. And in Alabama there's 886 congregations. In these three states, Texas, Tennessee, and Alabama, we have 35% of all the membership of the Church of Christ. Delaware has only 9 congregations. Rhode Island has 7, and Vermont has 11. In the state of Minnesota there are 62 counties without even one Church of Christ. There's even a county in Alabama, Washington County, down near Baldwin County, that does not have a congregation.

I appreciate having the opportunity to present this study on the subject, that "Evangelism Begins At Home", let us "Do Good" in understanding that. Someone has well stated, "If we believed now what they believed then, we could accomplish now what they accomplished then." I believe that's true. The Book of Acts proves this point and as we look at the Apostles doctrine, please stay with me because I want to say some things that will challenge you and encourage you.

Do we no longer believe that sinners are lost? Let me ask you these questions. Have we ignored the importance of "The Church", and it's involvement in local, personal, and "State Side" evangelism? Have we forgotten the value of a soul? Have you been to a funeral lately? Then you know the value of a soul. Does hell no longer exist? Are we content to let our neighbor go to hell, in a good humor? Have we forgotten about eternity?

Let me ask you a serious question in view of our paid staff members. Why are we baptizing only a few each year and establishing even fewer congregations, or helping those new congregations who are smaller and struggling? Why are we falling way behind in these areas? We have become, I believe, selfish, and I think we have become lazy and full of self ego, while many people in view of our castles and gems are dying every day and going to torment with no hope. We have few revivals now to cover that area, few revivals to reveal that "one" true New Testament Church that asks the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Within some of our Cathedrals you mention the term, "Church of Christ", the walls would crack. Why is that? Instead of that . . . What have we done? We have workshops, we have seminars, and retreats, and we have recreation to appease ourself, and Satan is having a picnic. I wonder if we're so tied-up to our own little world, and to the TV that we have no time to evangelize. I just wonder, "What are our priorities?"

We should all ask the question, "What is God's charge to the Church?" What is the work HE gave the Church to do? What is the purpose of the Church? In Matthew 28, Jesus says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." In Acts 1 HIS plan was, Jerusalem, Judah, Samaria, and all the earth. That's the pattern and when we translate that to today, we have our family, we have our community, then we have the State, we have the United States, and then we have the rest of the world . . . If not why not?

The Church sponsors everything from musical shows to ball teams. The Church is not in the business to win a softball trophy. You may not like that. You may get mad at me, but that's O.K., but where is the scripture approval for it? The Church is not the business to wear a dirty ball uniform, and to win a softball trophy. That's not why Jesus hung on the cross six agonizing hours, but that's what we've come to. 1 Samuel 8: 7, we want to be like everybody else.

Did Christ hang on the cross for these matters, or to evangelize? "The Church" is designed by our Heavenly Father to be in the Spiritual business. If we go next door, or if we go to Florida, if we go to Trinidad, or if we go to Africa, or Russia, by the Grace of God, let's preach the gospel and not Doctor Feel Good pep talks.

What are the needs when we visit, now. I remember the good days, I call them good, when I went out visiting with a good brother. Some of the people we'd visit, I can remember some time, to many times, when we'd visit someone who had moved in, the question from them would be, "What do you offer me? What do you offer my children? What are you going to do for me? What are you going to do for us?" I felt like saying, "Look, you need your spiritual diaper taken off and given a good case of Church discipline. Instead we told them what we can do and offer . . . we can get you to Heaven. That is what we promised them, on more or no less.

Congregations have spent millions, and millions, and millions, and millions on recreation, and gyms, and souls are dying everyday and going to a devil's hell. Something's wrong . . . Something's wrong! Ephesians 3: 21 tells us the purpose of the Church, and that's to give God glory, and all that we do we must have a, "Thus Sayest the Lord", to give HIM glory.

I am neither "Anti" nor am I liberal, I can promise you that. I do believe there are some things that are wrong, and grossly wrong with our thinking when it comes to doing good, when it gets back to the subject, "Evangelism Begins At Home". Souls are at stake. If you see a fire truck going by, or you see a paramedic go by in an ambulance, they're saying, by their action, "Get out of my way, everything is at stake!" That is the way we should feel about the Gospel.

In the book of Acts, the Church grew every time when one of these three things took place; When the Gospel was taught and preached; When Christians lived it; And when they were concerned about the Church being established in other places. Facility expanding or proselytes are not real growth. Don't ever equate that to real growth. It's like today, a lot of people with children equate "things" with love. They miss the whole point. You see, instant growth by another congregations problem is not a substitute for our work that God gave us to do. We're too hung up on the score board. I really believe that this is why. Several years ago, I put on our marquee, "We have no Gadgets, Gyms, or Gismos, just the Gospel." A member of the congregation got upset about it. How could a person get upset when all we said was that all we offer is the Gospel? Something is wrong, no doubt. When the chip dip, the watermelons, and the ice cream runs out if that's what you weaned them on, well that's what they're going to want. That is sad.

May I suggest one thing before I forget it? The suggestion is that every congregation of God's people, after making a "dedicated concentrated" effort, quit

worrying about those who leave and are no longer among us. Let's quit worrying about them and do the work that is at hand.

You know areas in this Country, besides those at home that need to be involved in Evangelism. I know you of this congregation have done so many good works for so many years in Evangelism. And I know that, but I guarantee you that you never spent a better two hundred dollars a month in supporting a mission effort that what you sent us, me and my family, while we were in Wewahitehks, Florida.

For years that little-o-congregation, the only one in that county, Gulf County, had begged somebody, pleaded, and advertized, just somebody help, and nobody would. But because of you, we were able to go. As a result the congregation grew, and the congregation is stabilized. One of the men we baptized is now preaching. About three weeks ago he baptized his Mama and Daddy. That's what it's all about. And the congregation has made God proud.

Now let me tell you why . . . Let me tell you why folks don't mess with areas like that, areas like Gulf County, Florida. Let me tell you why preachers don't mess with areas like that. I remember the day we got there. We had driven all night to get there and I told the people who moved us that I would meet them at the Church building at daybreak. Sure enough, when I got there they were waiting on us. They were from Birmingham. The first thing they told me, they knew me, they lived not far from us, they said, "Preacher, how in the world are you going to be able to stand it down here?" Mosquitoes were eating them up.

But let me tell you why. You see places like that are off the "Lecture Circuit". Places like that are off the "Revival Circuit". They're off, you see, the "Money Circuit". They're off the nice setting, comforting, cushion, job. It's always amazing to me, when I hear my brethren talk about, they're going to make a move and it's always this one over here that can pay him \$100,000 a year and they have a 1,000 members, and blab – blab – blab – blab, and they got this one here that's got 15 members, there's no other Church for half a day's drive, and they prayed and they say the Lord sent them to this "big one". I don't believe a word of that!

It all comes back to our lesson and the question, "Why do this important work?" Why support this important work of "Evangelism Beginning at Home"? Because we imitate what Jesus and the Apostles did. Because souls are at stake and we can save them. Because we obey God's command in the "Great Commission", Because we bear fruit. Because we build up and maintain "The Church", and not just housekeep, but we allow the Gospel to spread and souls to learn of the Heavenly Truth.

Brethren for so long have thought that yahoo rally's, public shows and chats in the fire side room will get the job done, and it will not. It won't get the job done! It all comes back to "Doing Good" in Evangelism. The more good we do the more prejudice we tear down. I'll agree in a lot of areas it's harder now to convert people that it used to be. I'll agree!

Listen . . . we have a "time" where I am, down in Birmingham. The whole congregation, the whole city, has deteriorated, and we're in a terrible location. YES . . . "IT IS HARDER NOW THAN IT USED TO BE!" Believe me, it is, but we owe the

unfaithful, the unchurched, we owe these lost certain things. When I read the Bible in the book of Acts I see where they were steadfast, they were God fearing, they were united, and they were liberal, and they were jealous, and they were happy, and they were respectful, and they were successful. They understood the importance of evangelism, LET US DO GOOD!

3 John 11 talks about that . . . that we should imitate that which is good. We should imitate what they did in the book of Acts, because that was good. The Bible says in Galatians 6: 10, "Let's do good to all men." That's more than giving him a five dollar bill or a sack of groceries. Let's do good to all men. Let us give them the opportunity to know Jesus personally, and I'm not talking in the denominational sense either.

By accepting the fact that evangelism begins at home, we're on the right road. When you review the scheme of redemption that God has revealed down through the ages, you can see the importance of local, state side, and world evangelism. The Church, how to get into the Church, and the purpose of the church . . . all are important. We've given folks, I think, the wrong impression of the blood bought Church. Have we forgotten what Jesus established and why? When you read the Bible, once again, in these 66 Books, the 1,189 Chapters, the 31,102 Verses, the 791,328 Words, the 3,566,480 Letters, it tells us that the Bible is "Right On" in every subject. Psalms 119: 128 says that it is right in all things. My "Brothers" and "Sisters", it is "Right On" in Evangelism, and how we do it!

We have given folks the wrong impression. We owe the lost an example of what a Christian ought to be. We owe them a pure view of "The Church". We owe them the truth and not half truths. We owe them the hope of Heaven, as God's children we owe them these things.

A man that I baptized several years ago, who is now an Elder, and his son is now preaching at this congregation said this not long ago, that he didn't believe in teaching and preaching the gospel any more and going out and evangelizing. What he said, we ought to do was to love people into the church. That is not going to get it. If love is so important, why is love not mentioned in the book of Acts, not one time, if love is so important. We love in deed and truth, not tongue and word.

The greatest love I can express to those people in Wewahitchka, Florida, or those across the street, or in Russia, is that I'm a Christian and I want you to experience the joy of being a Christian. We have played church while multitudes are marching into everlasting hell. We coddle, pet, pamper, spoil, protect, and baby the lost for fear we might hurt their feelings. Until we recognize that the lost, are really lost, we're not going to get the job done. We do not, can not, and must not try to win them by any other means but by the "Gospel", the "Good News", the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus.

The only time I ever remember, in the Bible, that Jesus got sick is recorded in Revelation, Chapter 3, when a congregation along with other congregations forgot their mission, and forgot what they were in existence for and it made the Lord sick to His stomach. HE said to them, I just want to throw up, you just make me sick.

We cannot sneak upon people with truth, like we got an old "toesack", like you're going to throw it over their head and blind them. You can't do that, or by other means, you know, any other means, other than by going to them through evangelism.

I wrote this down and I believe it to be the absolute truth as to why, maybe, we don't do good in believing that evangelism begins at home. I think, as we begin to look at this, that we all have our golden calf, that's number one, that is we love something more than we love GOD. I really believe that. In the second place, I think we're selfish. I really do. In third place, I believe we've adopted the philosophy that hell no longer exists. I believe that we're lazy. I believe our hearts are not in it. I believe our priorities are all wrong. I believe that we do not believe that the lost are lost. I believe that we have a lack of love for the poor lost souls.

I'm not saying this to rake you over the coals, but I say these things in hope that it challenges you to think more seriously about evangelism and that it begins at home. Before Russia, Trinidad, and Africa, can hear the gospel, it must start in the heart with our neighbors, it must start here on the State side.

I think we have done many places here in the United States grave injustice by overlooking them with so many good works and so many needed works out there. I cannot understand why we've gotten to this point, but in our neurotic, disquiet, materialistic, hell bound world, it seems that we have no time for others, no time allowed them to see and to know "The Church" that Jesus is coming back one day to get, to receive, the saved those that are of it. Are you a club member or are you a disciple? Think about that while we preach this lesson.

I want you to think seriously, are you a club member or are you a disciple? I gave a lot of thought when I was invited to talk about the subject, "Doing Good - Evangelism Begins at Home". I thought, well we've tried this through the years. We've rewarded, we've awarded, we've coached, we've picnicked, we've bannered, we've pep-rallied, we've sealed, we've diplomaed, we've badged, we've buttoned, we've played, we've dramaed, we've oyster stewed, we've car-washed, we've BAR-B-Qed, and the lost is still lost.

Mark 5: 19, says, go to thy house, and go to thy friends, and tell them about the Lord and what great things that the Lord has done. Go to thy house and friends, that's where it begins. We cannot teach what we don't know, nor can we win souls not practicing what we are supposed to. Teach . . . Teach . . . Do Good, evangelizing!

In our weak, I think feeble faith, when anything out of our schedule goes wrong, what do we want to do? When a tragedy or catastrophic event happens, what do we want to do? Lots of our brethren pop pills. They get on uppers, get on downers, or get on whatever, when they should go to the throne of Grace and depend on our Heavenly Father. That is the way it is when it comes to our responsibilities as well.

In the Bible, Zachariah 8: 23, says, we will go with thee for we have heard that God is with you. That's what is going to make the difference when you know and see and hear that God is with you, it will make the difference, if you will let HIM. Our denominational friends have tried everything, from trained seals, to ball teams, to dancing, in order to draw people in . . . and it hasn't worked. Why do we think it will for us? It's - not - going - to - work! When they know, and see, and hear, that you're God's people, that's going to make a difference.

Satan has marched a hoard of people, I'm convinced, across the stage of life in total deception. There are four ways we can defeat the devil, they are: 1). You live a

pure life. 2). You win a soul. 3). You be happy. 4). And, You stand for the truth. You will put the devil on the run if you do these four things.

Any congregation CAN grow, maintain it's identity, and be a congregation which will make our heavenly Father so . . . so proud. Here is the best advice I can give to the Elders and members of a congregation in order that they be such a congregation. Attend every Worship service, Bible school, attend all extended programs which are designed for learning how to serve, and YOU get out and practice personal evangelism.

There was an article in one of our Religious Papers which got my attention. It read; For sale: Used Personal Work Kit. I thought, that's strange. A used personal work kit, I thought, that's the problem. This microwave, brill cream, you know, a little dab will do you, type religion don't work, and that's why it don't work.

Duties must become desires, duties must become that which we desire and crave to do. Have we shut the door as they did in Malachi 1: 10? They closed the door to GOD'S House. Have we closed the opportunity by being in love with our own world and being so selfish, like Jonah who was so selfish. He was a great patriot, but he was a sorry spokesman for God. Is that us? This is "DOING GOOD" . . . when we don't shut the door and allow people to come through the door of opportunity.

I don't know what to say, some might suggest, when challenged to do personal evangelism. Tell them what you know. Tell them what you did. Those who turn many to our heavenly Father will be as stars that shine forever. That is what you will be, a "Star For God" which will shine forever. That's what you will be when you practice personal evangelism.

We don't need traveling salesmen with how-to-kits. I never, never have seen that work. When folk do visit and they come to the place to worship, let's preach the truth, let's give them an opportunity to know the Master and know what to do to be saved. You as well as I brethren know that you can burn their castles, or their bank account, or their gems, and you are going to burn their religion to the ground, and that ought not to be. As has been said before, I think we've entertained, we've spoiled, we've petted, pampered, coddled, a half converted membership. There are place which praise the preacher, Christ is forgotten, the cross is ignored, the Bible is unopened, but they say . . . we're growing. But what are they growing into . . . a glory to God? I say not.

Some are willing to grow at the expense of . . . whatever. But that's not God's way! Someone has well stated it this way, "The Church that is doing nothing is on it's way to the cemetary. The members that are doing nothing are the pallbearers, and the brother that is saying nothing is driving the hearse. That is true. When we refuse to do good and not practice personal evangelism that begins at home, we're driving the hearse, and the church is on the way to the cemetary. If we do not grow we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Let me please emphassize that I'm not against world evangelism, I've done it myself, but I'm telling you that we have no one to blame if we forget how evangleism progresses, step by step, according to Acts 1: 8. Joel 3: 14, said, multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, but what are we to do about it? People and souls are not important. Do you believe that? Do you believe it's things or do you believe it's people and souls that are important. Which is it?

You say, "Well I don't know, things are really what make a person happy and content." You have this man or woman over here that's driving this \$60,000 car and just bought a quarter million dollar condo and live in a half million dollar house. They have CD's and bank accounts and you name it. He's got ulcers and he's a nervous wreck and he's got heart problems, and he's a chain smoker . . . He's got it all, we think. It's not going to work. Materialism just don't work. Total misery and complete failure.

Had not my wife and her uncle taken time to believe and practice personal evangelism, I would never have know the ways of the Lord. I'm thankful somebody took time, to show and teach, how about you? You are a product of that. Can we do no less? Many now believe, no doubt, once saved always saved. Many now are content, many now believe in proxy religion. Hire the personal worker, hire the evangelism done. Many today have the missionary concept. Just don't bother me with it. We no longer believe the Church is in the soul saving business. Many are willing to send more than they are willing to do.

I'm not against nice facilities, I'm for that, all the way, but we're not to build them and say, "Now you all come." Satan laughs, and has a picnic. We look at evangelism as being an inconvenience, and the cry of today. Let me tell you something, you're not going to miss anything on TV because there's not a whole lot worth watching on there. I'm telling you.

As you think about this, "How does one become a Christian?" Christianity is a taught religion. How does a baby learn to talk? By hearing Mamma, Daddy, and others. Christianity is a taught religion. To have a Christian, you plant the seed, Luke 8: 14. The only way you are going to get a Christian is, "You teach the Bible". How in the world are you going to get a Catholic? You have to teach Catholic doctrine to get a Catholic. That's it, that's the only way. How are you going to have cotton? You have to plant cotton.

The only way you are going to get a Christian is to teach and preach the word. The lost deserve to hear the truth. Remember in Numbers Chapter 21, when God sent fiery serpents among the people and the serpents bit the people. The people went to Moses and confessed that they had spoken against the Lord. God took away the serpents, and directed Moses to make a serpent of brass and if any man that had been bitten would look upon the serpent of brass he would live. Can you imagine the Jewish people there, and here's this Brother that has benn bitten by the serpent, he's bleeding, has arm is all swollen, etc. No, no, what was needed to be done was tell him what he must do to live. . . Look upon the brass serpent as God had directed him to do. Man, if you want to live, do what the Lord has said.

That's where it begins, at home in personal evangelism. Let's describe the terribleness of sin, but let's prescibe the cure too. They go hand in hand. That's a must that the lost deserve. I'm told that 90% of the members of the Church of Christ have never saved a soul. I'm told that 79% of those who attend our assemblies do so by word of mouth invitation. Many congregations are not establishing and maintaining the church in other places. I think it's sad. Satan says later, let someone else do it.

I said earlier, when we go, when we do personal evangelism, when we do mission work, when we go across the street, let's don't talk about everything but the truth. Let's talk about souls, the Bible, and the church. We can talk about the weather, and TV, and the Atlanta Braves anytime. We need more than social visits. We need more than Country Club atmosphere talks.

It has been said that many put on their Church clothes but not within, and many people carry their Bible but they are ignorant of it. Let's not be that way. Here are my suggestions. Why don't you invite you neighbors and friends; Why don't you live a Christian life seven days a week; Why don't you be at peace with your brethren; Why don't you do good at every opportunity? Why don't you love the church and pray for the church, and pray for the lost, and pray for the unfaithful? Why don't you have a winning spirit, not with little thoughts and little results, but with big thoughts and big plans? Why don't you know the book; Why don't you support the Church; Why don't you become active and attend every service and convert one; Why don't you demand sound gospel preaching?

We will never rise above the teaching and preaching that we receive. We'll never do that. The reason that I'm not involved...think about the seven churches in Revelation 5, and think about why I'm not involved . . . think about it! Am I too busy, is that the reason? Have I forgotten the value of a soul? What about our enemy, is it not apathy? We must rid the Church of this attitude and get back to personal evangelism.

What will it take to get you interested in it? What will it take to get you interested in personal evangelism? What will it take to get you interested in local mission work, in state side mission work, in neighborhood mission work, and in World Missions. What will it take . . ., to march all the lost for all times before you? I don't know! The Bible tells us the work that needs to be done, it gives the guidance we need to do, and the motivation to get out and do.

The best good that we can do to or for others is to give them an opportunity to be a member of the Church of Christ. The one Church in the Bible, the one that is blood bought. Christ's Church.

I appreciate your time. I pray and hope I have not disappointed you. I pray and hope I've said something that will challenge you, that will be aware of the fact that we all believe in world missions, and in doing good, and personal evangelism begins at home, family, neighbor, your community, and the Church where you work, study, and worship, and State side.

I suggest and challenge you to love one another. Love your congregation. Love it with all your being, and you pray for it, and you work with it, you support it, and encourage others to get out and tell those who have never heard, who don't know the Church of the Savior. Tell them what it would take, what they must do for them to be a member of that blood bought Church.

Support your congregation and love it. Defend it at all costs, I pray for you and hope you will continue to make God proud. God help us all to be better in doing good and knowing and believing that personal evangelism begins at home. Thank you for your time.